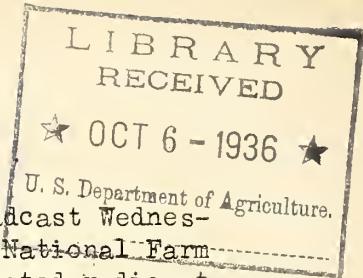


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Ex 892 Raa

WHAT FARM WOMEN ARE DOING IN HANDICRAFTS



A radio talk by Ella Gardner, Extension Service, broadcast Wednesday, July 1, 1936, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, transmitted by NBC and a network of 51 affiliated radio stations.

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If I could see what you are doing as you listen to this broadcast I would know better just how to approach this fascinating subject. Many of you, I am willing to wager, are engaged in some kind of handicraft and the majority of those who are so occupied probably are enjoying their work even though they may be making nothing more unusual than a necessary but smoothly woven darn.

As I planned a discussion of the interesting crafts that farm women are pursuing, I remembered the exhibit that was the center of so much interest and comment at the recent conference of the Associated Country Women of the World and decided that you would like to hear about it if you were not able to come to the conference, and that you surely would enjoy recalling the colorful displays if you were fortunate enough to have seen them in May.

Handicrafts of all kinds were exhibited during the conference. They came from farm women in this and other countries and spoke distinctly of needs, cultures, and love of home and family all the world around.

The objects might be classified in many ways. For instance, there were articles to meet the urgent need of shelter - handwoven coverlets, comforters lined with hand-carded wool, warm mittens and jackets, or big, cool, shade-casting hats. There were lovely colorful articles to add comfort and beauty to the home, - beautiful block printed wall hangings, hand dyed and carefully woven rugs and mats, baskets, pottery, and beautifully carved and polished wood, ivory and bone, birds, beasts and boxes. There were objects designed to adorn their maker or someone dear to her - purses, scarfs, daintily embroidered handkerchiefs, blouses, and small dresses. There were toys - wooden and corn shuck dolls, carved animals, toy houses, wee wooden dishes, and Easter eggs dyed by a shepherd's wife, carrying on their sides the tiny ferns and meadow flowers of English fields.

The articles might well be classified by the many materials from which they were made, a special section being devoted to the ones that were created from materials that were prepared by the women who used them. The wool for a comforter was shown in all the stages through which it had gone from the time it left the animal's back until it went into its silk cover, a smooth, fluffy, clean, soft batting. There were baskets of native needles, splints, withes, and vines; buttons of polished peach stones and sections of black walnut; gloves and bedroom slippers of home-tanned leather; cornshuck brooms and mats; and gourds cleaned and dried for bowls and bird houses.

(over)

There are other ways in which the articles might be grouped but the most fascinating approach to me is through an imagination that allows us to see the women at home making articles of double wool in Sweden and of thinnest grass in Ceylon, weaving a cotton purse here and cutting one out of the skin of a python in Rhodesia. The articles that were made told clearly of their makers, yet there were some characteristics that were common to all, whether they came from Lapland or South Africa, from Australia or the States. The outstanding characteristic is that these articles were beautiful in workmanship and design. The woman who made them had put themselves into their work and made it good. The designs obviously were full of meaning. There were no unnecessary lines. Colors in any one article were few and chosen for their values and suitability. Those of us who saw it will not soon forget the effect of cream that deepened into yellow and orange and then to bronze and brown in the display from Kentucky. Everything in that case, from the sunburst quilt to the gourd bowl blended into the rich yet simple color scheme.

Suitable, though sometimes surprising materials cleverly used, balanced designs, ingenious planning and always everywhere skilled, careful workmanship characterized the whole exhibit.

I am sure that the women who did this work would agree with Marjorie Greenbie who says, "In the fine arts one learns to give form and limit and meaning to the world of dreams --- One learns that a fine idea is nothing until with slow patience and experiment one has somehow bent the innate cussedness of metal and fabric and wood and paper and paint to its realization". And that in such realization lies deep satisfactions and the high peaks of fulfillment.

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